

**Western Montana Resource Advisory Council**  
**February 22, 2006**  
**Minutes**

**RAC Members Present:** Sue Marxer, Garry Williams, Robin Cunningham, Dan Lucas, Richard Young, David Schulz, Ben Deeble, Rob McCulloch, Mitzi Rosillon, Dennis Phillippi, Jack Kirkley, Pat Flowers

**RAC Members Absent:** Francis Auld, Donna Tate McDonald, Joyce Ann Thompson

**BLM Staff:** Nancy Anderson, Missoula Field Manager; Rick Hotaling, Butte Field Manager; Tim Bozorth, Dillon Field Manager; Marilyn Krause, Becky Zurcher, and Brad Rixford, Butte Field Office

**Guests:** Rob Brooks (MT FWP)

**Welcome**

Marilyn Krause welcomed everyone to Butte. Some of the field managers were not able to attend the November meeting, so introductions were made.

It was noted that two of the RAC members would be leaving at the noon break. Marilyn mentioned there were additional handouts for anyone interested: The Noxious Weed Quick Reference Guide and the Aquatic Weeds handout.

**Nomination period now open:**

Marilyn noted that the nomination period is now open for new RAC members. The theory is that if nominations are earlier, people will get appointed earlier. Applications are available for anyone interested. March 27<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for applications.

- Unfortunately terms are expiring for Sue Marxer and Rob McCulloch. They have served two consecutive 3-year terms and they are not eligible for re-appointment. So there will be an opening in grazing and minerals.
- Donna McDonald's term is expiring. She is eligible for reappointment, but has chosen not to. That will be another opening in Category 1.
- Terms expire for Richard Young and Dan Lucas in September. They are eligible for reappointment. Dan Lucas has indicated he would like to be reappointed. Richard Young needs to let Marilyn know if he would like to be reappointed.

**Sue Marxer:** asked for clarification on the deadline date for applications and clarification on the openings (grazing, outfitting, and minerals).

**Field Office Overviews**

**Nancy Anderson - Missoula Field Office:**

The Missoula Field Office is currently working on the Hoodoos Watershed which covers approximately 53,000 acres. Scoping letters were sent out the end of December and then in January two open houses were held: one in Helmville and one in Deer Lodge. There were about 20 people between the two areas. Those comments are being gathered up and then the Field Office will start the EA (Environmental Assessment). They plan to have the EA completed in April.

A scoping letter was sent out in January concerning a right-of-way (ROW) request in the Fred Burr Creek area of Granite County (south of Philipsburg). The request was from the county, and is for a ROW through 80 acres owned by the BLM, that will access the backside of Discovery Ski Area. RAC members should have gotten a copy of the scoping letter. The public comment period ended February 15, 2006.

There was more interest in that ROW than anything the Missoula Field office has done in a long time. The Field Office will be starting their EA this spring and working through that process.

### **QUESTIONS:**

**Pat Flowers:** Do they want to develop access to the backside of Discovery?

**Nancy Anderson:** Yes, in the future. We want to get together with the Forest Service to look at what they are doing with Discovery. The road will also access some private land in the area; Phillipsburg is strongly supporting it.

**Pat Flowers:** Is the back side of Discovery on Forest Service or does BLM have a fair amount of it?

**Nancy Anderson:** We only own this 80 acre strip, and then I think it's mostly private.

**Dan Lucas:** Discovery is on a special use permit on the forest. The Forest Service did a land exchange several years ago for the big horn habitat at Lost Creek and there were a number of sections in Granite County that were put up as part of that exchange and Sec. 18 went to RY Timber. Peter Pitcher, who owns Discovery, bought Section 18 and now he would like to have public access to Section 18.

### **Nancy Anderson:**

Work is continuing on the Blackfoot Community Project which involves the acquisition and disposition of Plum Creek Timber lands in the Blackfoot River watershed. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is purchasing those lands; being acquired by BLM, USFS, and private landowners. As part of the project, the BLM has acquired approximately 5,480 acres of land in the Marcum Mountain area. On January 24, 2006, the BLM closed the direct purchase of two additional parcels (120 acres) within the Marcum Mountain area, purchased directly from individual land owners. While the area is within the BCP, these acquisitions are not part of the project.

Additional restoration work on Cramer Creek has begun (part of the Linton mine reclamation). Last year's rain event wreaked havoc on some of the stream bank restorations. The contractor has completed the bank reconstruction work. Willows have been collected and cached, to be used in the bank stabilization work this spring.

The EA for the Whitaker Bridge abutment has been completed. The bridge crosses the Blackfoot River upstream from Johnsrud Park. The project will replace an old wooden abutment with concrete. The work is anticipated to take approximately two months and will begin this September. We will probably have the road closed while the work is being done or at least you won't be able to cross the bridge.

### **QUESTIONS:**

**Ben Deeble:** Which bridge is it you're doing work on? How much BLM land is involved? **Nancy**

**Anderson:** The Whitaker Bridge. Quite a bit of BLM land is accessible. We have about a 10 mile stretch and Whitaker Bridge is about in the middle of it.

**Ben Deeble:** So you see it being closed about September/October during the hunting season?

**Nancy Anderson:** You will be able to access to the bridge and you can come in the other way. It was either that or do it in the summer when the rafters and tubers need access.

**Dan Lucas:** On the fuels work that was done up at Garnet – did that work out pretty well?

**Nancy Anderson:** What Dan is talking about is some fuel reduction work we've done around Garnet. The first phase was 20 acres right around town. The problem we had is there are so many cultural resources, that we had to do a test area to see what worked and what didn't. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was concerned about the project work up there. The 20 acres is done and it went really well. It was part of a 300 acre area to be done over the next couple of years. We took DNRC up there to show them what we were doing.

**Rick Hotaling – Butte Field Office**

The Butte Field Office is working on the Butte Resource Management Plan (RMP). We hope to have a draft out sometime this spring/summer. We basically have all the alternatives put together. We've done all the travel management for the areas we're going to do.

The Legislative EIS we are doing with the National Guard is being reviewed now and we are getting ready for the draft due out about May/June with public meetings to follow. The Legislative EIS is the withdrawal in the Limestone Hills, through the National Guard, for their training range. In that same area, the Guard has requested a qualifying training range for 50 caliber machine guns. The Butte FO is working on that EA now, which will be a new use for the training range. We are trying to address some of the issues dealing with the Limestone Hills mine and trying to avoid impacting the other uses out there. The BLM has asked the Guard to do most of the work on the EA. This was originally proposed for 2010, but the National Guard got money for it this year, so they want to get the money obligated this year.

We just did our 1<sup>st</sup> phase of acquisition of the Iron Mask Ranch property. The Iron Mask Ranch is about a 6,000 acre ranch that sits just north of Limestone training range and abuts the Forest Service on the west side and the highway to Townsend on the east. The ranch was on the market for several years. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) was interested in helping with the acquisition and originally went in and asked the USFS to acquire it, but the land is outside the USFS boundary, so BLM was asked to do the acquisition. There was a legal dispute, but in July of last year, the owners decided to accept the offer from the RMEF and The Conservation Fund (TCF). A month later, they acquired the property from the owners. Then working with the RMEF and TCF, the BLM will acquire the property. We hope to apply for some grants and then request land and water conservation funding (LWCF) for 2007 to complete the acquisition. The area is great winter game habitat. It is the "crown jewel" of the effort the RMEF has been leading in the Elkhorns.

**Richard Young:** So, the RMEF bought the land from the landowners and then you are giving money to the RMEF?

**Rick Hotaling:** Actually it's The Conservation Fund. The RMEF and TCF have an agreement. TCF actually bought the property and the RMEF is securing the note. The BLM then divests them of the property.

**Richard Young:** So the federal government does eventually wind up putting funds back to manage and purchase the land?

**Rick Hotaling:** The agreement we had with TCF is that whatever they paid for the property is what the BLM will pay them as long as it does not exceed fair market value. If they paid more than fair market value, we give them fair market value; if they paid less than fair market value, that's what we pay them. Plus there is an administration cost for them.

**Dennis Phillippi:** Based on other purchases, I would say that is a very reasonable figure for the acquisition.

**Rick Hotaling:** Yes, our appraisal for that land was at \$500 plus or minus/acre. There are some beautiful sites on that land that we acquired. If the land had been developed, it would have fragmented a huge area of winter elk habitat in the Elkhorns.

**Pat Flowers:** We worked with RMEF too and we really appreciate the effort you put into making that happen because it is an important piece of ground. Thank You.

**Dennis Phillippi:** Pat, why didn't the teaming effort work for FWP?

**Pat Flowers:** Our Habitat Montana program got reauthorized in the last session and we had a commitment to come up with a prioritization process, which is not in hand yet. The timing was wrong.

**Sue Marxer:** Was it a working ranch?

**Rick Hotaling:** No. It had not been grazed in 10-15 years.

**Sue Marxer:** Goes off the tax rolls, right?

**Rick Hotaling:** Yes; it becomes PILT (Payment In Lieu of Taxes) for Broadwater County. The county commissioners supported us in this acquisition because in Broadwater County, for the basic acreage even as a working ranch, the money we give them in PILT payment exceeds what they would get in property

value tax for that property. If it was subdivided, they would get more money, but they did not want it subdivided. Other acreage will be given to Broadwater County for development. The other thing about the Iron Mask Ranch is that when we complete the withdrawal to the National Guard, which is about 20,000 acres, we will quit making PILT payments on that land because it becomes part of the Department of Defense.

**Ben Deeble:** There has been all the news about the USFS being asked to dispose of lands to pay for rural schools. Is there any potential for the BLM being in that mix?

**Rick Hotaling:** Yes, BLM has not developed their list yet. USFS has their list out. It is published and you can look at their web site to see where the parcels are. Through the RMP process, the BLM is currently identifying scattered parcels of lands not accessible to the public.

**Pat Flowers:** Having prepared similar lists, I would have to say “prepare for the beating”. There is a perception problem. No matter how rational it is, the perception is selling off public land is a bad thing.

**Dennis Phillippi:** My sources say it is dead on arrival.

**Pat Flowers:** There was some rumbling for awhile that PILT payments might go away; that they were going to re-structure them?

**Rick Hotaling:** I haven’t heard anything about that.

**Tim Bozorth:** Part of this selling of land was to offset the Forest Service decrease of payments for rural schools. Is that what you are referring to?

**Pat Flowers:** I thought it was payments to do with taxes somehow.

**Rick Hotaling:** A couple more things to mention. Regarding the Golden Sunlight Mine Supplemental EIS: we hope to have the final EIS and Record of Decision out sometime in April.

We did a fuels/forestry project in Clancy, associated with a travel management area, in which we took all the slash from the timber sale, had it chipped and we’re now hauling the chips away, to be used as a heat source for a mine in Idaho.

**Garry Williams:** Has that been cost efficient?

**Rick Hotaling:** No. It is costing the BLM a lot of money to get rid of the chips.

**Rick Hotaling:** We got a letter from Jefferson County, concerning roads in the county. It was sent to the Forest Service, BLM, DNRC, and FWP. We are working with the Forest Service on that particular issue. Jefferson County wants to have more involvement in the road issues. The letter states they are taking ownership of all roads and paths in Jefferson County, to assert an RS2477 ROW on every road/path. We met with the county commissioners and that is not what they want to do. But they want to work more closely with the federal agencies on road issues.

**Richard Young:** You mean you have some of the roads closed?

**Rick Hotaling:** The County felt that when we close roads, it causes an impact on the county. They felt that only the county has the right to close roads.

**Richard Young:** Do they then have to maintain the roads?

**Rick Hotaling:** That is the question we posed to them. The BLM basically worked through the issue with them, as far as what they are asking for. The issue is that they want more involvement with the Federal Government with travel planning. Going to court over RS2477 is not their intention.

**Dennis Phillippi:** Back to Limestone Hills – did you anticipate the EIS in the planning process originally?

**Rick Hotaling:** For the RMP? Yes – it started before the RMP. The original thought was that the withdrawal would be completed before the RMP came out. We’ve had to change that position

**Dennis Phillippi:** So, it slowed you down some?

**Rick Hotaling:** It did a little. Plus we are working on two major EIS’s which have a lot of planning involved, so it gets to be a resource staffing issue.

**Dennis Phillippi:** What about that fuels project just North of Whitehall? How's that going? The Whitetail Basin Demo Project?

**Rick Hotaling:** We did burn part of it this fall, but did not complete the burn because the objective is to kill all the trees out there. They didn't feel they could meet the objective with fire this fall, so that is to be completed this spring in those test parcels. Whatever the fire doesn't get, the BLM will have to cut down.

**Tim Bozorth – Dillon Field Office**

Dillon RMP: Protest letter responses were sent from the Washington Office on 2/6/06. The Dillon RMP Record of Decision (ROD) was signed on 2/7/06. The Final RMP will be mailed from the printer on or about 3/3/06. The Notice of Availability will be in the Federal Register on 3/10/06. [NOTE: NOA was not published on 3/10/06.] The protest resolution took 8 months.

**Sue Marxer:** Referring to the protest period: How did that change the plan?

**Tim Bozorth:** We made no changes based on the protests we received. It is a long, drawn out process that takes a long time to get anything accomplished.

**Pat Flowers:** What is the next step for those who want to protest - District Court?

**Tim Bozorth:** Yes, it would have to be litigated and we don't expect that to happen.

**Tim Bozorth:**

The Dillon Field Office is working on the Sage Creek Watershed Assessment Environmental Assessment. Last year they looked at 22 allotments in the Sage Creek Watershed; 110,000 acres. They will continue to work on that this winter, and hope to get it finished this spring.

The Dillon Field Office (DFO) recently lost two key positions. Renee Johnson, RMP team lead, moved to a position here in Butte as the Assistant Field Manager for Renewable Resources and Mark Goeden, the Assistant Field Manager in Dillon for Renewable Resources, transferred to the Forest Service in Bismarck, ND. Pat Fosse has been moved into Mark's position. She will be the new Assistant Field Manager for renewables for the Dillon Field Office. The field office did get approval to fill a Rangeland Management Specialist vacancy we've had for nearly a year. We are unable to fill behind Renee or Pat.

The Dillon Field Office is gearing up for Watershed Assessments this year, about 40 allotments on 95,000 acres on the Blacktail and South Tobacco Root watersheds this summer.

Montana Mining has filed a Plan of Operations for processing vermiculite mine tailings at the Elk Gulch Vermiculite Mine in the Sweetwater Mountains, east of Dillon. A proposal to mine this site in the late 1990's coincided with Libby and caused quite a stir. The DFO worked with EPA and DEQ; DEQ took 57 samples and analyzed them for asbestos this fall. Only trace amounts were detected; less than 1% and 1% asbestos is the standard. So the field office is proceeding with this proposal. They are now doing NEPA work on it. There has been a lot of controversy in the local community on this. They had planned to do some of the processing in town, but won't do that now. It will all be bagged or covered when moved.

**Sue Marxer:** How would they take it out?

**Tim Bozorth:** They would go down Carter Road, run it around and come out on the Highway where the new vet is, then out to the interstate.

**Sue Marxer:** That is a mess up there, that mine. Have you seen that mine? Is there a different operator at the mine now?

**Tim Bozorth:** They are in the process of doing some expansion. That is all on private land.

The Ermont abandoned mine site clean-up is scheduled to take place this summer west of Dillon. This is about a \$1 million project to clean up mine tailings and hazardous mine openings. The field office is in the final stages of the design work and the contract will be let this spring. Construction will take place this summer to avoid sage grouse concerns.

The Dillon Field Office is working to fix up cabins in the Gravelly Mountains and at the Nye Ranch property on the Beaverhead, to enter into a rental program.

The Dillon office is finishing tree marking in the Centennial Mountains. This sale and prescribed fire are part of the Centennial Watershed Assessment forest health treatments; to take care of the dead and dying trees, to reduce some of the hazardous fuel build-up. There are slightly over 2 million board feet in this sale that will be out for bid this spring. The BLM has been working with American Wildlands, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, and Montana Wilderness Association to design those. BLM staff will have a meeting tomorrow with those folks and some other folks from Sun Mountain to look at how to do the final design on another portion of that whole picture in the Bean Creek Drainage. There is a sale proposed there. The main issues will be around the road, and the fact that Bean Creek is 100% pure west slope cutthroat trout habitat.

### **Questions:**

**Jack Kirkley:** What part of the Centennial Valley?

**Tim Bozorth:** It is west of Lakeview; east of Price Creek. It was not part of the Winslow fire and it is outside the Wilderness Study Area. It is mostly Douglas-fir.

**Dennis Phillippi:** Who will become your new range staff person?

**Tim Bozorth:** We are not replacing Pat's position. That is the position we will be losing – the supervisory range person.

**Sue Marxer:** Will she still be doing that in her new capacity?

**Tim Bozorth:** Basically, yes.

**Dennis Phillippi:** When is the effective date?

**Tim Bozorth:** The effective date for that was Monday and Renee came up here the 6<sup>th</sup> of January

**Dennis Phillippi:** The final version of the grazing guides – are they done at the national office?

**Tim Bozorth:** I've not heard that they are putting them out yet.

**Dennis Phillippi:** The question was - will the RACs get a chance to see them again.

**Tim Bozorth:** No. You won't see them again and neither will we.

### **Montana Challenge:**

**Pat Flowers:** Montana Challenge was an effort that came out of our recognition in Fish Wildlife and Parks, that the world is changing and Montana is changing dramatically. And with that our business and constituency is changing. We wanted a comprehensive picture of the demographic changes and economic changes, in order to be prepared to deliver future goods. We needed better information to deliver to counties. This concept came out of that and with discussions with the Forest Service. This has been well received by economic interests and by non-government organizations/groups.

Rob Brooks coordinates our responsive management unit, collecting survey information for us. The majority of our funding in FWP comes from license sales, so if we're not keeping close tabs on the pulse

of our constituents, we can find ourselves in trouble as far as funding. Bob's job is to make sure we're keeping our finger on that pulse.

**Rob Brooks:** This project started about 4 years ago. The Forest Service came to FWP with demographic information and asked FWP what could be done with the information.

Rob Brooks presented a power point presentation on The Montana Challenge – “Where the West meets the West”. He discussed demographics of Montana and how they are changing throughout the state. He divided Montana into three regions. They differ biophysically, economically, and demographically. There has been an out migration from eastern Montana and growth in central and western Montana. Rob showed a variety of graphs and statistics, depicting demographic changes in the state. The demographic and economic changes in Montana reflect national trends. There has been mass domestic migration to the Rocky Mountains, so much so that the Rocky Mountain Front is being referred to as the Third Coast. **The Montana Challenge** is to remain the last best place for fish and wildlife in a changing west. For more information on The Montana Challenge, visit their web site at <http://fwp.mt.gov/tmc>.

The Goals of the project:

- To document and understand Montana's changing socio and economic conditions
- Analyze how those changes affect fish and wildlife and the human uses that occur around those resources.
- Discuss with Montanans the implications for natural resource management and economic development.

The project is now in its third phase – a discussion with Montanans. One thing that has come out of this study is that public access is critical. If people can't utilize our resources, they are not going to value them. If there is one message FWP would like to get across from the Montana Challenge, it is that healthy ecosystems with healthy fish and wildlife populations, with good public access to those resources, provides for a unique quality of life in Montana and helps generate some economic prosperity for the state. Addressing these challenges will take a lot of effort by community leaders, business leaders and agency folks working with their publics. The question is: What do you want to see Montana look like 20-30 years from now?

The Montana Challenge Asks Us

- How do we maintain healthy productive landscapes on public and private lands?
- How do we insure the health and abundance of our fish and wildlife
- How can we maintain public access to these resources?

### **Questions:**

**Dennis Phillippi:** Do you have a philosophy or process for bridging the gap between the two philosophies (between traditional and emerging economic interests)?

**Rob Brooks:** No. We're working with a professor at the University of Montana. He presents information at the outlook seminars and we have asked him to draft a chapter related to the wood products industry, talking about the forest industry in terms of the quality of life for Montanans. A lot of people move to Montana for the scenic view.

**Dennis Phillippi:** That's one piece of the puzzle, certainly when you figure Montana is two thirds private land/private ownership. You think of public access issues and I see some work needs to be done.

**Rob Brooks:** Absolutely. The other two things I will mention: we're going to be working with Montana State University, in terms of developing the agriculture information provided here, because as you pointed out, private lands are a huge part of our land base and they are critical in terms of our wildlife resources. We'll also be developing a chapter on access and hopefully open up more discussion about that and

provide information about what access was 50-100 years ago, where it has evolved to today, and how we might move forward with it.

**Pat Flowers:** I think part of that bridge will never occur because part of it comes out of the philosophical difference among economists on how you assess economic conditions and project economic changes.

**Dennis Phillippi:** You need to add more people to the formula; that's where common ground will be.

**Pat Flowers:** That's my opinion. That camp will remain there. It's a healthy debate.

**Rob Brooks:** What we would hope for is a healthy discussion. We just don't want to get into a controversial debate.

**Ben Deeble:** I noticed on one of the slides that net farm income has declined by 44 % from 1990-2000. Is that a real number or an artifact of accounting or what?

**Dave Schulz:** Maybe in the last 2 years there may be a transition because of livestock prices being somewhat better. But when you compare the receipts from for example a cow or cow/calf sales and you offset that with the cost of living, all in all, agriculture is in a decline. And yet I tell myself one of the best things that can help is to keep looking and assessing and making good decisions.

**Sue Marxer:** Something else that was apparent in the slides. In eastern Montana, ranchers are getting older. Ranches are being sold off; estate tax is a big issue.

**Rob McCulloch:** The other part is that land is too expensive to farm. You used to be able to make a living and pay for the land by farming. Land is being sold now for development/subdivisions. Montanans cannot afford the land. The ranchers can't compete.

**Sue Marxer:** A lot of people would like to enlarge their farm size but can't afford it.

**Rob McCulloch:** We see the same push because I have processed some conservation easements. The theory behind conservation easements is to leave that land in agriculture, but what I am really seeing is they pre-subdivide the land, then get a conservation easement to cut down on the taxes, then sell off the land in residential housing.

**Pat Flowers:** I don't completely agree – there are some valuable conservation easements.

**Rob McCulloch:** Examples of Ruby Valley and Twin Bridges are some of the worst.

**Pat Flowers:** But there are some large conservation easements that are meeting some of this need where they are keeping working ranches, retaining it as good wildlife habitat, and providing public access.

**Sue Marxer:** Sometimes even the conservation easements are political.

**Ben Deeble:** Is BLM analyzing this internally, this kind of trend and what it means for the agency? Is the BLM looking at the fact that we appear to have farmer/ranch income collapsing as well as shifts in land use? Are you analyzing that and including it in the planning?

**Tim Bozorth:** There was recognition of that in the Dillon RMP. Our recreation use is dispersed, and we know it is increasing, but we don't have a way to quantify it.

**Sue Marxer:** We have been in an extreme drought and cut backs on BLM lands are what - 40%? We can't increase the herd because of the effects of the drought.

**Tim Bozorth:** They were up to 40% last year – that was the highest.

**Rick Hotaling:** To answer your question Ben, yes. On a national basis, the BLM looks at demographics. We know that the population in the west is growing rapidly. The amount of population living within 25 miles of BLM lands has grown exponentially from the 60's and 70's to now, and we continue to see it grow. There is more demand on public lands. We have both traditional uses and emerging uses and that demand is growing and needed. It is a challenge to balance use and maintain a sustainable resource.

**Rob McCulloch:** Which probably explains why RACs exist now. Will it change our docket as far as what questions we're asked and asked to respond to?

**Rick Hotaling:** I definitely think so. Travel management is a large part of the RMP and that deals with managing people; where they can go, and what they can do when they get there.

**Jack Kirkley:** I'll start with your points on watchable wildlife. I think there's been a shift in the FWP agency as well as the thought going into the importance of the private lands. If I want to show people



watchable wildlife, I will go by the Matador Ranch on the portions that aren't hunted because that is where you see big game this time of year. And yet the disconnect I think, for folks is that they don't realize how critical those wild lands are up above the private lands the rest of the year. Granted you won't see as much wildlife while driving BLM and Forest Service Roads. But when there was a slide show about Montana's wild lands (Rick Graetz), Governor Schweitzer was there to give the opening remarks and people knowing that he was showing up had the first picket I've seen since the logging trucks rolled up and the wilderness debate was occurring even before '85. Here's the governor giving his blessings to wildlands. It was just a slide show. There is a disconnect there that somehow giving tribute to wild lands means closing down access to OHV's or they will get locked out of their hunting or fishing areas because of Wilderness with a big "W". I think there is sort of a tunnel vision in our public in Montana that it is an either/or situation. That it is this conflict between private lands and public lands. I would sure like to look at ways to explore diminishing the heat that's generated when you talk about wild lands and wilderness or is it wildlife or is it agriculture when it really has to be a blend of those. It has changed a lot – it has gotten better. But it still has a long way to go. We need to find that middle ground and realize that wild lands are important for wildlife and water quality and there is nothing scary about having those. There are places where there is no access, and that is where you are going to see the animals. And I don't see any of the agencies saying lets have a few places where we aren't going to gun everything. Look at how many people just want to go see wildlife. And I am a hunter.

**Pat Flowers:** Drive up the Madison; drive up the Ruby. I don't think that is an issue because there is so much closed land. The challenge is not to have it go further than it already has. Because it is astounding how much viewable wildlife there is from the road! I see the opposite being more of a problem.

**Dan Lucas:** One of the things we deal with regularly is education. So one of the other demographics I would like to see added to the presentation is to go back 70 or 80 years; look at the percentage of population that is directly dependant for their livelihood on agriculture and natural resources. And then transpose that to the number of people who really have direct knowledge of what resource management is. And that's where we get into the philosophical things, not only with the economists, but there is a philosophical difference of opinion on what it means to manage resources. We dealt with that on a local level when we were doing watershed assessment for Rock Creek. 89% of the Rock Creek watershed lies in Granite County; 11% in Missoula County. Unfortunately, Missoula County drives the management on that watershed and 86% of our private sector economy is directly related to agriculture and natural resources; less than 2% Missoula County. They really don't have a close connection to the land, and yet they drive the management. Education is the only way we will bridge the philosophical gap.

**Rob Brooks:** Good point. We chose 1970 because in the late 60's and early 70's, there was some major not only national legislation, but some local legislation. That's when Montana's constitution was rewritten. NEPA, clean water, clean air – all these national acts were implemented. So we went back that far to see if that changed the way things were viewed. But you make a good point – we may want to go back farther, for the ag, possibly wood products and some of the other basic industries that have put Montana where it's at.

**Dan Lucas:** For example, I had a discussion with some folks on lower Rock Creek, and their statement was I want this view out my window, up this portion of the stream, to never change. I want my grandchildren to look at the exact same view. I tried to explain to them resources are dynamic. No matter what we do, this is not going to look the same when your grandchildren come. You can either choose to have some influence on what it's going to look like or you can back off and see what you're going to get.

**Dennis Phillippi:** Regarding the agenda item about how would the RAC like to be involved in Field Office projects – is there any way RAC could work with rural development groups, on things like you just presented? There are certainly some missing parts in rural development.

**Richard Young:** I read that, particularly back east, hunting is decreasing in this country. Is that true?

**Pat Flowers:** I just saw two articles in the last few months in the NY Times talking about the greening of hunting. And they were basically saying: get out there and hunt – it is a green thing to do. Maybe that will turn around.

**Rob Brooks:** Over the past 10-15 years, hunting nationally has been slowly declining. The last couple of years, statistics have shown that, possibly because of the greening and maybe it's a little more socially acceptable, it's been increasing. Be careful though – it depends on which statistics you look at.

**Rob McCulloch:** I think it is important that the agencies that manage those lands look at habitat enhancement of border properties, to pull the burden off the ranchers, by creating places the game want to go and then to work with ranchers to urge them to go back to it. What are we doing wrong in management that game animals have no desire to be in remote areas?

**Pat Flowers:** That question is easily answered - access. If you have people hunting those grounds, the animals won't be hunkered down on those grounds. But you've got to put pressure on animals in those areas. The Madison is a perfect example of that.

**Sue Marxer:** There is a second component to that. We've got the feed and the water.

**Pat Flowers:** True, but there is feed and water up higher.

**Rob Brooks:** I'll use eastern Montana as an example. Because of the Habitat Ranch Consolidation, people are coming in with a different view of whether or not they want to allow hunting. We have a tremendous controversy going in eastern Montana. The ranchers who have been there for 40/50/100 years are saying we allow people to hunt on our property. With a new rancher, who may only live on a place periodically and doesn't allow hunting – the animals aren't going to leave. The animals aren't stupid. They learn quickly that if they jump the fence, they are basically in a refuge. Discussions are needed in the communities, with the ranchers.

**Sue Marxer:** That's where the balance comes in. We used to allow a lot of hunting, but then all of a sudden you've got all this access, you're overwhelmed; you lose control. There's got to be a balance.

**Rob Brooks:** It can't be just a discussion amongst the agencies and the ranchers. The community needs to come together and say, can we as a community work something out that will benefit all of us? Agencies can not solve this issue on their own. We need to involve the community. That's what the Montana Challenge is all about. We need to get out there in the community and develop some political, business community solutions for these issues.

### **Nominations for election of officers:**

**Marilyn Krause:** Opened nominations from the floor for the election of officers.

For the Chair person, nominations were: Dan Lucas, Rob Cunningham, and Dave Schulz

The group asked Marilyn to clarify a few things:

**Marilyn Krause:** Officers are elected the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the calendar year.

Chair responsibilities:

- helps develop the agenda/approves the minutes
- serves as a contact person for the national, state and local RAC coordinators
- works with the BLM to set up subgroups
- sometimes facilitates meetings
- attends national conferences
- time spent depends on issues at the time

### **Selection for Chair: Dan Lucas**

Nominations for Vice Chair were: Dennis Phillippi, Rob Cunningham and Dave Schulz

### **Selection for Vice Chair: Rob Cunningham**

## **AFTERNOON SESSION:**

**Marilyn Krause:** Does the RAC still want the "Standards and Guidelines Implementation" handout? This is for the Dillon Field Office. We should have Butte's and Missoula's by the time we send out the minutes from this meeting.

**Ben Deeble:** I think this is very useful. Tim, just browsing through this, it seems like there are more instances of not meeting Standards & Guides than in previous reports. Am I interpreting that right?

**Tim Bozorth:** This is a combination of everything to date, so it covers about the last five years. It was done, starting in 1998 and going through last year. Pat got the last stuff in there, so you can see under the year assessed, where we are. Some things we're not meeting the standards on; others we are. We may look at a riparian area and say here we are not meeting the standards, so the allotment isn't, because we need to make some changes. But other areas we may not need to do anything in certain pastures. The Washington office spoke to the difficulty in trying to assess standards and then amalgamate things so you have an accurate picture of how much of the land you're not meeting standards on vs. how much you are. Each state is looking at things a bit differently as far as if they count acres or miles. I'm not alarmed at what I'm seeing. There are places we know we need to make changes and are going to make changes based on the assessments and where we don't have AMP's or we have something that is not working, that's where we're not meeting standards. I am still startled that in 2006 we still have allotments out there without grazing strategies on them. I think the process is valuable.

**Ben Deeble:** There have been decisions sent directly to our homes and I want to commend you on what looks like some good decisions and some tough decisions in the past 3-4 months.

**Marilyn Krause:** So what I hear you saying is that at least for some of you this is valuable?

**Tim Bozorth:** This at least gives you an opportunity to know more about what we're doing and an opportunity to ask for more information.

**Jack Kirkley:** And when we see something that says current management continues, we would assume that it was prefaced with something like no concerns noted or that no red flags came up.

**Rob McCulloch:** How do your technical people feel about this? Have they found it more measurable; is it a useful tool for them?

**Tim Bozorth:** The watershed assessment process and assessing standards? Yes. We go out as an ID team and we look at biodiversity issues as a group and after walking areas, we discuss what we think as a group. As a whole, it is good for the specialists to hear different points of views and then they can formulate their recommendations.

**Jack Kirkley:** What is this about air quality?

**Tim Bozorth:** I was the primary instigator in putting the air quality in there. I was trying to get across a message that these don't just apply to grazing. They apply to all uses of the public land and all uses need to comply with the standards. It may be somewhat limited in its usefulness, but the intent was to keep that thought process going for the RAC's.

### **Recreation Resource Advisory Councils Update:**

Brad Rixford gave a presentation regarding Recreation Resource Advisory Councils (RRACs). He gave out two handouts:

- (1) the DRAFT interagency agreement and,
- (2) a copy of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA)

Brad discussed the fee authority history:

- Agencies have had broad authority to collect recreation fees for over 40 years under the LWCF Act of 1965 and more recently through the Fee Demo Program, which was established in 1996.
- REA is different from LWCF in that it ensures fees are reinvested back to collection sites and units.
- REA differs from the Fee Demo program in that it limits where fees can be charged based on the amount and types of facilities and services provided.

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) was passed in December 2004. The Act:

- Grants recreation fee authority to 5 federal agencies for 10 years.
- Requires BLM to re-invest a minimum of 80% of its collections back to the fee source.

- Directs BLM and the USFS to establish Recreation Resource Advisory Committees. FS has agreed to use BLM RACs where already established in the western states.
- BLM is responsible for (1) public participation efforts and notices prior to establishing fee changes, (2) assessing new fees and establishing criteria, (3) informing the public about how fees are being spent, (4) seeking advice from RRACs, and (5) submitting annual reports back to Congress.
- Fee revenues available at each site may be used for maintenance and repairs, facility improvements that enhance visitor enjoyment, visitor access, health and safety needs, visitor information, habitat restoration, law enforcement and direct fee program costs.
- Overhead management costs can not exceed 15% of total collections.

**Current Status of Act Implementation:**

- BLM and USFS have drafted an Interagency Agreement for the establishment and functions of the Recreation Resource Advisory Sub-committee under existing RACs. Comment period ended 2/17. The final draft is to be completed by 3/15. It will then be presented to Congress for approval in June and a Federal Register Notice released shortly thereafter.

**Primary responsibilities and make-up of the Recreation Resource Advisory Councils (RRACs):**

- Provide advice on fee proposals and make documented recommendations.
- Made up of 7-13 members (Act says 11).
- Members shall represent the following interests: motorized and non-motorized recreation, hunting and fishing, motorized and non-motorized outfitter and guides, local environmental groups, state and local governments, Indian tribes and a tourism representative or a balanced representation agreed to by the Advisory Council.
- A USFS representative will also be a member when USFS fee proposals are being analyzed.
- Multiple advisory councils may use the same subcommittee.
- Must meet at least once per year or more often if needed.
- Meetings must be open to the public and records kept.
- Members must be willing to consider both BLM and USFS proposals.
- Secretary shall appoint members from a list of nominations made by the Governor and a designated county official.
- Staggered terms of two to three years.
- Chairperson selected by the subcommittee.
- Eight members shall constitute a forum.
- Recommendations may be submitted to agency heads if approved by a majority of the members.

**Summary of Butte Field Office Recreation Fees:**

- Currently manage 6 fee sites (Expanded Amenity Sites)
- Fees collected for camping, day use of highly developed facilities, group reservations, and day-use seasonal pass.
- Issue between 15 and 20 Special Recreation Use Permits.
- Total collections last year were about \$140,000.
- Pending needs include new fee site at White Sandy and possibly Holter Dam.
- Later proposals expected for East Bank, French Bar and outfitters using our boat ramp areas for commercial purposes.

**Richard Young:** I'm confused. This is supposed to look at both the Forest Service and the BLM, right? Some of the forests have RACs. Is that right?

**Marilyn Krause:** Except FS RACs are for a different purpose. They're formed at the request of the counties and they deal with funding – money for particular projects.

**Dave Schulz:** Yes, I am on the forest RAC. Back to the earlier discussion: the "Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act" of 2000, better known as public law 106393. The county can

dedicate certain dollars; these are those forest reserve dollars we talked about earlier; and Madison County puts 20% of our total allocation into this. The RAC in the Forest Service is simply a grants review team made up similarly to this group in background and diversity but only to assess projects and grant those dollars for different projects that relate to the forest. So we don't have authority or direction or position to make recommendations to the agency on management.

**Richard Young:** So the RRAC - what are the options? That this group would become the RRAC or if it was accepted by the Forest Service and their representative showed up here or is it setting up a whole separate RRAC?

**Marilyn Krause:** I think where RACs are established, like this group, it would become a subgroup of this particular council.

**Dennis Phillippi:** Who do they report to?

**Brad Rixford:** They would make their recommendations straight to our State Director.

**Dennis Phillippi:** Which is a deviation from the way our subgroups are functioning under this charter.

**Tim Bozorth:** This needs to be clarified in the agreement. If it's a subgroup of this group, it should come to this group, for you to forward or have some say in that recommendation - if it's according to our current charter for this group. So there are some things that need to be worked out.

**Tim Bozorth:** One question for Brad: I agree with you in general on your assessment of the workload except where in regards to SRP's - that's a whole new ball game. Every time we review or renew an SRP, it needs to come to this RRAC?

**Brad Rixford:** It says implementation of non-commercial, individual special recreation permits. So, most of our permits that we issue tend to be commercial. They are still trying to decide whether or not the RRAC would deliberate over a modification of existing fees. That may or may not be something the subgroup would even look at. It might be just new fees only. We are just about to finish a site this year on Hauser Lake called White Sandy that we're spending about 1.5 million dollars on and we may not even have a fee by Memorial Day 2007. We had anticipated one when we wrote the Environmental Assessment. So the public has been alerted through the NEPA process. Now, according to this we can't do a thing until we get approval or concurrence.

**Rob McCulloch:** Do you have the ability to set the fees independent per site?

**Brad Rixford:** The way we've been structuring our fees has been a bit specific in the sense that where we have lakes and people come for longer stays, we have to provide more amenities and more services, so we tend to charge a higher fee at our lake sites. We do have the freedom now to charge different fees.

**Tim Bozorth:** And we've all been through a review process on those fees already to see that they are appropriate. We did that 6 months to a year ago.

**Rob McCulloch:** I was just looking at this last thing that came out that the federal government had across the board established one reservation system, that added \$9 to every reservation made out there.

**Tim Bozorth:** Yes, that is the Forest Service automated system for cabin reservations.

**Rob McCulloch:** Are you guys into that one too?

**Brad Rixford:** There's only one site that has that. Oregon has one big campground where they have a reservation system.

**Richard Young:** Your cabins are not going to be on a reservation system then?

**Tim Bozorth:** I'm hoping not. At this point they're not. We tried to get the one tied into the Forest Service system, but now we are just doing it out of our office.

### **Dennis Phillippi's Summation of the Whitehouse Conservation Conference:**

In August, I attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> ever Whitehouse Conservation Conference. The first conference was held in 1906 or 1907; the other one was held when Teddy Roosevelt was president. This was a 3-day conference. To give some background: during the last 20 years, I have served as a facilitator and mediator as a conflict resolution person for some 300 different groups across the country. So that was the basis for being asked to attend - it was by invitation.

Back in April last year we were contacted to submit nominations for this conference, for actual presenters, which resulted in this book called Success Stories across the United States. I nominated 16 success

stories. They didn't have to be government stories; could be private, or non-government, anywhere there were good success stories about people working together to solve issues. So I nominated 16, and 3 of them were selected. One is in this region - the Blackfoot Challenge. It was highlighted pretty much at the conference. The other two were the Malpai Borderlands area of Arizona/New Mexico – it's mostly all grazing related things. That group did an excellent job of moving from a degraded watershed and landscape to a success story. The other one was an eastern Nevada landscape coalition, which was out of Ely, Nevada. Those were all discussed to some degree at the conference.

It was a 3 day conference with 1200 people invited. One and a half days was spent by the participants celebrating success stories and attending sessions. I took in the Blackfoot Challenge one, because I think it is a real model for Montana. Those folks have done an excellent job of bringing some controversial issues to where they have a partnership. The other day was spent in break out sessions and groups, to share experiences. All comments were recorded and there are proceedings out for that. They should be on a web page (Dennis will give the web site address to Marilyn). Secretary Norton was at the break out group and she had some excellent points to make on this whole arena of cooperative conservation. She and her staff are very committed to these partnerships and cooperative approaches to dealing with conflict. There is another opportunity to visit with her and her staff next March, to further the discussion on cooperative conservation.

I felt it was very successful. It put more of a focus on this initiative of partnering around conflict. The budget shows there will be money available toward the quality of conservation. So we were all encouraged to come back with suggestions on where there is a need or a group that is ready to start doing things. Maybe the Montana Challenge could fit into something on a cooperative scale, either on a local level as a trial basis like Dave was suggesting or Montana itself.

Just about any environmental or natural resource topic you could think of was covered at the conference - the whole gamut was covered. Attending was very worthwhile.

**Marilyn Krause:** who else from Montana attended?

**Dennis Phillippi:** People from Blackfoot. It seems like there is money in the pot for cooperative conservation. The chair of this cooperative conservation push is the CEQ director – James Cunningham. He sent out a 4-page email showing four categories where we could get involved at the local level – agencies and folks that are in this partnering thing.

**Marilyn Krause:** So how would groups get involved?

**Dennis Phillippi:** I will give you the web address when I get back. But back to the RAC - I see things from a community and a resource basis that could fit into that perfectly well. We just need to get more information to everyone here to see where we fit into this. It seems this would be perfect for RACs and local groups working together for conservation means.

**Marilyn Krause: introduced the discussion topic: “How would the RAC like to be involved in Field Office projects.**

**Nancy Anderson:** My question is more administrative. I think all three offices might be giving you information in different ways. What we started doing is for our major EA's, we include the RAC members. We give them a copy, just to provide Missoula Field Office information to the RAC members. The last time we sent something out, I started thinking about it and wondered if that is the way the RAC wants to receive things? We can do it electronically. It is really up to you as to how you want to receive information.

**Marilyn Krause:** Some of the new members may not yet be on the mailing list. But for those of you who are, do you feel you are getting too much information?

**Dennis Phillippi:** I think it's helpful because even though all of it might not be of interest to all of us, some of it is and those that see an interest can use it.

**Robin Cunningham:** Better to get the spectrum and make your pick.

**Marilyn Krause:** I think Butte does something similar to Missoula. We don't send every EA for every fenceline change, etc.

**Rick Hotaling:** It's basically the larger ones, the ones that potentially have more issues; not the simple ones.

**Tim Bozorth:** We do the same.

**Rob McCulloch:** The stuff I get from the Forest Service is categorized by area of interest, be it minerals, recreation or whatever. It talks about where it is in the process, usually what the location is and I find those fairly handy because I can go through and figure out who I need to call to get additional information. But it's just a one liner and I find that very helpful.

**Ben Deeble:** Should we receive all information electronically rather than hard copy? Or are there some things that are simply too difficult to push out of the office in anything but hard copy?

**Marilyn Krause:** Some files could be large if they include a map.

**Nancy Anderson:** Maps would be the hard thing, but we have most of our EA's electronically.

**Pat Flowers:** A lot of what we get from all three of your offices is notification of availability and those you could send us electronically.

**Marilyn Krause:** So, if it's reasonable to send electronically, does that work for folks?

**Dennis Phillippi:** Just notify us where to get it.

**Marilyn Krause:** And the level of the projects you've been sent – is that OK? It sounds like this was more of a verification of process. Except that we'll start doing more things electronically.

**Rick Hotaling:** So we should send our scoping letters electronically. Then if you would like to have a full copy, of a final EA or decision documents, we can either send it to you electronically or if it is too large to push through the email system, we can send it hard copy. MT/Dakotas is instituting our internet site (<http://mt.blm.gov>) and there is a place on there that talks about our projects that we submit. You can look at those projects and compare those against the stuff you are getting notified of to see if we are sharing too much information or not enough. We are supposed to be using the web site if it stays up.

**Rob McCulloch:** Is the claim recordation back up yet?

**Rick Hotaling:** I don't think so. The only thing that is up is the basic information – recreation, etc.

**Rob McCulloch:** I would say I have a request for the State Office number at least once every other day, and who in the office to address for claims, etc.

**Marilyn Krause:** In your minutes you'll see the schedule for the rest of the year:

**Future RAC Meeting Dates/Locations:**

- May 11, 2006 – Missoula
- September 6-7, 2006 – Dillon
- November 29, 2006 – Butte

**Future Topics to be discussed at the Missoula May 11<sup>th</sup> meeting:**

- Recreation RAC Update
- RMP Briefing (Tentative)
- Trial Project /Co-op weed project. Wash vehicles prior to hunting season/Dillon area (Tim)
- Grazing Guidelines?

**Discussion over these topics were as follows:**

**Pat Flowers:** Rick, do you think a draft Butte Resource Management Plan will be out by then?

**Rick Hotaling:** Maybe. I still need to get the Washington Office to approve the draft we're sending out. We should be close to having it in final format for the printer, so we could give you a briefing of what the draft RMP is going to look like. You may not actually have a hard copy to see for another month or so, but we should be really close.

**Dennis Phillippi:** I can't make May 11<sup>th</sup>, but will get information to RAC. Last year we had talked about a trial project out of Dillon that has to do with car washing for hunters and off-road vehicles for invasive species. I think it is worthwhile to pursue getting that in motion on a trial basis somewhere. I

think the RAC committee could support being involved in that. We should see about getting that on the ground by hunting season of this year.

**Tim Bozorth:** We've talked about trying to do something with the Beaverhead County weed supervisor. Right now we provide some funding to the local car wash. I will follow up on that some more.

**Dave Schulz:** Headwaters RC&D has sponsored a similar project in the last 4-6 years. Many of the car washes in Butte have supported it the first few days or weekends of hunting season. We've done it out in Beaverhead County and, for example, the carwashes in Madison County have done it. The drawback is that the carwashes want to help, but they would appreciate some reimbursement. We've used youth groups to help disseminate weed related material. The point I'm getting at is these things have occurred. I don't know how aggressively they are happening today. I do believe everybody here would recognize the importance of cleaning vehicles off before they do go into our public lands.

**Dennis Phillippi:** Public and private. I know a lot of private land owners won't let you on unless you've had your car washed.

**Rob McCulloch:** There was the comment Sue made. That a lot of the Matador was open until this last year and they found there was so much weed control incurred by letting them drive on their property that they shut the gate and made it walk-in only because they can't afford to take care of the weeds.

**Tim Bozorth:** One of the things we were thinking was some sort of sticker you'd get when you do that and then see if we could get some landowners who would provide increased access because of that.

**Ben Deeble:** How has it worked at the car washes? Do people get a free car wash?

**Dave Schulz:** Generally speaking, that's the emphasis or motivation. At the same time you've got a group of young kids washing your car off and often people will donate money anyway. Another thing that has come up is to take it a step further, to take it to an under body car wash. We looked at a project to raise funds to build one. It was \$15-16,000, so the interest of building 6 or 7 of them wasn't that great.

**Tim Bozorth:** At least. I know they had one in Worland. The BLM office there put one in and they had a lot of problems with it. The under body wash at Mini is about a half price deal. We offset that so that it is \$3. We will explore some options and see what we can come back with and let you know where we are in May.

**Marilyn Krause:** Any other topics for the May meeting?

**Ben Deeble:** Do we think there might be the new grazing guidelines out by then?

**Tim Bozorth:** Maybe – you'll hear when we do.

**Dave Schulz:** Remind me again when the council application closes?

**Marilyn Krause:** March 27<sup>th</sup>. So, if you know of people who might be interested, let them know.

**Richard Young:** Do you have to reapply?

**Marilyn Krause:** Yes – you do have to reapply. Dick, you won't have to, but for folks who submitted an application 2-3 years ago, they would need to submit a new application.

Marilyn Krause thanked Pat Flowers, for setting up the Montana Challenge Presentation and the meeting was adjourned.

Approved by:

/s/ Dan Lucas  
Dan Lucas, Chairperson